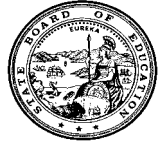


CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**Highlights from the State Board of Education**

A monthly summary of key actions taken by the SBE

December 2001

**SBE Adopts Waiver Policy to Ensure Disabled Students
Get Modifications to Take California High School Exit Exam**

The State Board of Education has approved a waiver policy to the California High School Exit Exam that will allow disabled students to use necessary modifications when taking the test, thereby ensuring those students will have a full opportunity to earn a diploma.

Under the waiver policy, disabled students who need special modifications such as readers or calculators to take the exit exam will be able to use them even though these modifications are deemed to fundamentally alter what is being measured on the test, said State Board President Reed Hastings. That means disabled students who earn the equivalent of a passing score on the exit exam with the use of the modifications will still be able to earn a diploma, Hastings noted.

"The purpose of the waiver is to permit those students who are otherwise qualified but do not have the opportunity to learn to read or perform math computations because of a disability, to receive a diploma," Hastings said in a statement.

Under the adopted waiver policy, a school district may submit a request on behalf of a student with disabilities to the California Department of Education with evidence that, among other things: 1) the student is successfully taking high-school level coursework and, 2) has taken the exit exam with whatever modifications are deemed necessary and has achieved a score equivalent to a passing score on the exit exam. The accommodations or modifications must already be included in a disabled student's "individualized education program" or IEP. *The policy and a Q&A that explains its purpose can be found on the Internet at www.cde.ca.gov/board/policies.*

Bid to Split LAUSD Denied

In a unanimous vote, the State Board rejected a proposal to create two new school districts in the San Fernando Valley out of the existing Los Angeles Unified School District, agreeing with the recommendation of CDE staff to deny the petition.

Under current law, the State Board may approve proposals for the reorganization of districts if the Board has determined that a proposal substantially meets the nine criteria outlined in Education Code Section 35753(a). The CDE staff analysis concluded the petition to form a North San Fernando Valley Unified School District and a South San Fernando Valley Unified School District failed to meet two of the nine criteria. The staff analysis found that the proposed split of LAUSD would not result in an equitable division of property and facilities, and that the proposed reorganization would disrupt the educational programs in the proposed districts and the remaining LAUSD.

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Specifically, the CDE staff concluded that the proposed reorganization would significantly harm the remaining LAUSD's ability to cover school facilities needs. The staff recommendation concluded that LAUSD would lose one-third of its bonding capacity but at the same time remain responsible for 89 percent of the un-housed students. With regard to the impact on educational programs, CDE staff concluded that proposed reorganization would result in the loss of magnet schools/programs; could seriously disrupt the Class Size Reduction program; and result in overcrowding conditions, especially at the middle and high school levels.

State Board Adopts Policy to Guide Implementation of SB 233

The State Board adopted a policy to guide implementation of SB 233, recently enacted reform legislation that is designed to streamline the state's student assessment system.

Generally speaking, SB 233 moves toward a standards-based assessment system while decreasing reliance on nationally norm-referenced tests, and eliminating redundant tests where possible. For instance, where there is duplication between standards-based tests and Golden State Exams (GSE) in specific subject areas, the Golden State Exams would be reduced and used to augment the standards-based tests. The adopted policy contains the following principles, among others, for implementation of SB 233:

- To affirm the commitment to state-adopted academic content standards and to reaffirm the California Standards Tests (CST) as the official measure of progress toward meeting the standards;
- To reduce redundancies across testing programs and to reduce testing time and the testing burden at the high school level;
- To work collaboratively with the Postsecondary Community.

The policy notes that SB 233 calls for the involvement of the postsecondary education community, and that the purpose of this consultation is to identify the additional content and degree of psychometric rigor that the postsecondary education community believes is needed to inform postsecondary placement, college credit or admission decisions. The policy further states that the first priorities in launching the CST/GSE augmentation process are in English-language arts using the 11th grade test and in mathematics using the summative high school math test for the additional purpose of making postsecondary placement decisions, with the initial focus on use by the California State University system.

Before the Board adopted the policy, Board President Reed Hastings said, "I seek to reassure the Golden State Exam community ... that this Board is not seeking to tear apart either the GSE program or the important and good aspects of the Golden State program. If we do this right, and I think that we will, the only difference that the field will notice is that there's less testing time and less duplication, which would be a real positive." *The policy can be viewed on the Internet at www.cde.ca.gov/board/policies.*

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SBE Adds 5th Grade Standards-based Science Test and a History-Social Science Standards Test for 8th Grade

In line with the state's move to increase the emphasis on California Standards Tests, the State Board approved the addition of a standards-based science test to be administered at grade five. The test will assess science content standards for grades four and five (cumulative).

The SBE also approved a history-social science test for grade eight that will assess content standards for grades six, seven and eight. The first administration of these tests will take place in spring 2003. Under the provisions of SB 233, the history and social science norm-referenced tests in grades 9, 10 and 11 will be eliminated because they have no alignment to California's academic content standards. The State Board will continue the California Standards Tests in history-social science in high school.

In Brief

CHARTER SCHOOLS -- The State Board granted two new charters under the oversight of the SBE, giving conditional approval to petitions by the New West Charter Middle School (Los Angeles Unified School District) and the Animo Inglewood Charter High School (Inglewood Unified School District). Both charters are for three years, running from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2005.

CURRICULUM COMMISSION -- The State Board appointed the following individuals to four-year terms on the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission: Norma J. Baker; William D. Brakemeyer; Sandra K. Mann; and Dale Webster. The terms start January 1, 2002 and end December 31, 2005.

This document is also available on the Internet at www.cde.ca.gov/board/highlights/. For more information, contact Phil Garcia, SBE Deputy Executive Director, at (916) 657-5478.

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